DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 304 742 EA 020 649

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TITLE Women in Educational Leadership. Monograph. Volume 3, Number 4.
INSTITUTION Ohio State Univ., Columbus. Center for Sex Equity.
SPONS AGENCY Ohio State Dept. of Education, Columbus. Div. of Vocational Education.
PUB DATE 88
NOTE 8p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142) -- Collected Works - Serials (022)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Administrators; Elementary Secondary Education; *Equal Opportunities (Jobs); *Females; Futures (of Society); *Labor Force Development; *Leadership Qualities; *Participative Decision Making
IDENTIFIERS *Ohio

ABSTRACT

Although female teachers have dominated education, relatively few women have pursued administrative positions. In 1988, women in Ohio held only 4.5 percent of all superintendencies. The state generally lags behind the lackluster national average, according to a 1985 Project on Equal Education report. Because of changing U.S. demographics, future working women will take their careers more seriously than their predecessors. This paper discusses characteristics of future educational leaders, examines women's underrepresentation in leadership roles, explores women's leadership styles, and suggests ways for women to enter educational administration. Besides basic management skills, new leaders will need to possess vision, visibility, concern for people, power-building strategies, and a cooperative, yet firm leadership style. Numerous theories exist to explain the dearth of female leaders, ranging from fear of success to denial of equal opportunity. New brain research suggests that neurological differences may account for gender variations in organizing reality and achieving identity. Women should not assume a "male" leadership style, but develop their own style within the framework of their femininity. Many "female" traits previously considered liabilities (such as cooperation, intuition, and open communication) may prove to be valuable assets for 21st century female administrators. Recent research has demonstrated the benefits of feminine culture in schools. Women administrators offer various suggestions for aspirants: (1) know yourself; (2) share goals; (3) find a mentor; (4) network; (5) be prepared; (6) be above reproach; and (7) do not make gender an issue. Included are 27 references. (MLH)

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WOMEN IN EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

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INTRODUCTION

Historically, most school leaders have been male. Today, due to changing family structures (fewer children or no children, more single-parent families) and economic need, many women are striving for *careers* rather than *jobs*. As a result, women are increasingly interested in climbing career ladders, and they are developing a new interest in administrative positions. These women have resources and talents that must be developed as they prepare for leadership in the twenty-first century.

Although female teachers have dominated education, over the years few women have pursued administrative positions. In a 1985 policy paper, the Project on Equal Education Rights (PEER) reported the following statistics on the small proportion of women who have held administrative positions:

Administrative Position	United States in 1970	Ohio in 1985	United States in 1985
Superintendents	.6%	3.1%	6.7%
High school principals	3.0%	3.4%	6.1%
Junior high school principals	3.5%	6.9%	10.2%
Elementary principals	20.0%	24.4%	26.5%

Even in 1988, women in Ohio hold only 28 out of 615 (4.5 percent) superintendencies, according to Dr. Sherry Lahr, president of the Buckeye Association of School Administrators and superintendent of the Grandview City Schools.

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This situation cannot continue. America's population is changing; Americans are becoming older; more Americans are disadvantaged; more are members of racial and ethnic minorities; and family structures vary widely. Women are entering the work force at an accelerating rate. Labor Secretary William Brock, in a 1986 interview with *The Washington Post*, stated that by the year 2000, 80 percent of the new entrants into the work force will represent three categories: women, minorities, and immigrants. Additionally, the *Hudson Report* (1987) stated that "only 15 percent of the new entrants into the labor force over the next 13 years will be native white males, compared to 47 percent in that category today." It seems safe to assume that working women of the future will take their careers much more seriously than their predecessors.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE NEW LEADER

Individuals who provide leadership in the future will need basic management skills, such as the ability to plan, organize, and control. In addition to these skills, a shift in focus will be required of future leaders. Significant works on this subject include Peters and Austin's *A Passion for Excellence*, Ouchi's *Theory Z*, Bennis and Nanus's *Leaders*, Kanter's *The Change Masters*, and McGregor's *The Human Side of Enterprise*. These authors characterize the new leader as follows:

Vision. Kanter (1983) describes leaders as "Change Masters: those people and organizations adept at the art of anticipating the need for, and of leading, productive change." Bennis and Nanus (1985) agree that leaders must have a vision for the organization.

Dr. Sherry Lahr stated in a recent interview that "vision will be imperative for school leaders as the move is made into the twenty-first century." In addition to having vision, Lahr believes that "it is equally important to be able to share that vision and to have people see how it fits their needs." The skill a leader needs most is the ability to mobilize workers to align with the leader's vision.

Visibility. In order to convince people to align with their vision, leaders must be out among the troops, making certain that the troops know what the vision is all about. In the words of Dr. Richard Andrews (1988), "true leaders personify their vision for all to see."

Successful leaders of American and Japanese companies have their fingers on the pulse of their organization. They are in touch with their employees as well as their customers, and they are available and willing to listen. Peters and Austin (1985) called this phenomenon "Management By Wandering Around" (MBWA), and found that it was also the trademark of successful school leaders.

Concern for People. Fundamental to the idea of a *shared vision* and a belief in MBWA, is a concern for others. Successful leaders realize that they win with the assistance of other people. Douglas McGregor (1985), considered by many to be the founder of modern management theory, has been telling managers for over 25 years that people are vital to the success of the organization. Peter Drucker (1964) described the effective administrator as one who builds on strength, especially on the strength of people.

People are an extremely important resource in today's competitive world, and effective leaders pay particular attention to their people's development. Understanding that the chain is only as strong as the weakest link, effective leaders work hard to maximize strengths and minimize weaknesses.

Regard for people is of paramount importance because people are the focus of both process and product in schools. This issue is so important, in fact, that the Committee for Economic Development (1985), concerned about the quality of education in schools and its impact on our ability to compete in the world economy, urged a change in principal training programs. The committee believes that both men and women who can manage organizational change and people, and provide leadership for the school's educational programs, should be selected and empowered for leadership.

Power. Most of the current literature on leadership does not address the issue of power as related to a leader's success. However, without power leaders cannot lead. Kanter (1983) writes that the first step in becoming a *change master* is to understand power and how power is attained and to use it wisely.

The word *power* often conjures up negative visions of the authoritarian boss with a Theory X mentality, a person who believes that domination and force are the only methods for gaining people's cooperation. Kanter (1977) defines power as "the ability to get things done, to mobilize resources, or to get and use whatever it is that a person needs for the goal he or she is attempting to meet."

It is this perception of power by subordinates—the belief that the leader can get them the things they want and need—that makes a leader effective. It is impossible to lead without followers, and no matter how charismatic a person is, people will not follow someone they do not believe can help them in some way.

Individuals who believe that power is inherent in position are often disappointed. Many prestigious positions are without organizational or political power. Kanter (1977) writes that organizational power can be attained or increased in two ways: through activities and through alliances.

Power-building activities are those that get noticed by others, that cause others to see the leader as a pioneer, as one who is willing to take risks and explore new frontiers. These activities must also be important to the organization. Successful leaders recognize that it is imperative to make time for the significant few activities; they do not allow themselves to get bogged down with the trivial or with maintenance tasks. These leaders recognize that no one gets credit for doing what has to be done.

Alliances are also crucial to any power-building strategy. Seeking mentors, developing networks, and fostering loyalty among subordinates are all ways of accumulating power through alliances.

Effective leadership style. There is disagreement about the particular style of leadership that will be most effective in the twenty-first century. Experts do agree that understanding and appropriately handling power, and also having a clear vision and the ability to share it, increase leaders' effectiveness. Many experts also agree that recognizing the importance of people to the organization's success necessitates a leadership style that is both collaborative and participatory.

Much attention has been focused in recent years on the Japanese style of participatory management, in which

1. There is a commitment to developing the total person. The Japanese believe that individual needs

must be met within the subculture of the corporation—not by outside agencies. A happy worker is a productive worker.

2. Persuasion is more popular than command. The Japanese believe that workers must *buy into* the organization's philosophy. The values that the company adheres to are inculcated in all workers.

3. Leaders continually seek input from employees and customers. Employees are encouraged to be alert to and to suggest better ways of doing things. All suggestions are recognized and rewarded.

4. Leaders value interdependence rather than independence. Groups form the foundation of Japanese corporations. The Japanese realize that trust, communication, and commitment are vital to each group's success. Work groups also provide social bonds that employees highly value.

There are some who consider the Japanese leadership approach too soft to work in today's schools, where these critics believe an authoritarian, bottom-line stance must frequently be taken. What is important to remember is that *participatory* does not mean *permissive*. Practicing this leadership style does not mean never taking a firm stand. However, it does mean recognizing people as important and involving them in the day-to-day operation of their organization—the school.

Dr. Lahr agrees that developing a more collaborative management style will be important in the future. She believes that school administrators will have to give teachers a greater role in determining what happens in the organization. Lahr's concern is that most administrators have not been trained in participatory management.

Whatever leadership style new leaders choose, one thing is certain: The underlying premise must be a concern for people. The days of winning through intimidation or through the "camouflaged authoritarian methods of paternalism" (McGregor, 1985) are past. Perhaps Silva and Hickman best describe the new leader in the March 1988 *U.S. News and World Report* article "The 21st Century Executive": "less a commander than a coach, one who converts people and persuades them to shared values."

The importance of the aforementioned characteristics to school administrators is evident in Dr. Richard Andrews' fascinating research on instructional leadership. Andrews found a direct correlation between the perception teachers have of their principal as an instructional leader and the achievement of students (Brandt, 1987).

Andrews (1988) identified 21 principals deemed outstanding by their teachers, peers, and superintendents. Of those 21, 10 were female and 11 were male; 5 were employed at the high school level, 5 at the middle school level, and 11 at the elementary level.

Andrews then listed 18 characteristics of principals as instructional leaders, and gave the list to teachers who worked for those 21 principals. He asked the teachers to identify those characteristics they believed were most important. They rated the following characteristics as most important:

1. Represents a visible presence in the building to both staff and students

2. Provides a clear vision of what the school is all about

3. Mobilizes resources and district support to help achieve academic goals

4. Promotes staff development activities for teachers

5. Makes frequent classroom observations

6. Provides frequent feedback to teachers regarding classroom performance

The school administrator who must help education assume its position of importance in the future must possess vision, visibility, a concern for people, power, and an effective leadership style. The leader with these qualities will inspire teachers; it is teachers who make a difference with students; and students, after all, are the key to America's future.

WHY WOMEN ARE NOT IN LEADERSHIP ROLES

Numerous theories exist as to why more women do not hold leadership positions. These range from the notion that women fear success to the belief that equal opportunity has been denied.

In the past, women were not socialized to pursue administrative careers. Little girls were brought up believing that their primary role in life should be that of wife and mother. Kobobel (1986) summarizes the prevailing belief system: "A serious career tends to increase qualities in a woman—independence, decisiveness, assertiveness—that are generally not deemed ideal in a wife." Therefore, girls seeking husbands were advised not to take themselves or their jobs too seriously; after all, a job was only an interim station in life until a husband could be found.

As a result of this belief, women did not develop the skills necessary for advancement. They learned to do their jobs well and were content to remain in what Louise Fought, Superintendent of Penta County Joint Vocational School District, calls their "comfort zone." Due to their socialization, they did not recognize or develop to their full potential.

Horner's (1972) research suggested that women fear success. Her theory is that women become anxious about achieving success because they fear social rejection and worry that their femininity will be in question. Other researchers believe that women just define success differently than men. Men often define success in terms of work. They have different concerns about their careers and relationships than women. Women, on the other hand, often equate success with balance in their lives. In other words, many women are not afraid of success, they just refuse to accept the definition of success offered by men. The conflict between job and relationships (specifically family) was one of the major concerns for female administrators in a 1987 study done by Edson.

Many women claim that, in spite of Title IX and the Equal Opportunity Employment Act, discrimination (although often subtle) is still alive and well. These women report being questioned in interviews about their ability to handle male students or win the support of male staff members; seeing jobs requiring experience that few, if any, women have had the opportunity to gain; and learning, often after the fact, that an available position had been advertised *word of mouth* through men's networking systems.

Women who currently hold administrative positions do caution female aspirants to not be too quick to blame lack of success on discrimination. LaQuita Ingle, director of vocational education in the Dayton City Schools, said in a recent interview that she felt fortunate to have attained her success, but that she worked hard for it. Ingle stated that "some women fail to look at themselves, and sometimes something is wrong with them and this is why they have failed to move up the ladder." Overcoming discrimination and succeeding in a career requires hard work and persistence.

Ironically, women also voice concern about the negative attitudes of other women. Jealousy, competition, and lack of support from women educators were seen as problems by the participants in Edson's 1987 study. Kanter (1977) stated that women in leadership positions often had difficulty with other women who did not perceive them to be power wielders.

Successful women indicate that they were often their own worst enemies in achieving success, although other factors may have had a bearing. Their lack of confidence was the greatest barrier they faced.

Whatever the reasons, women have not held administrative positions in large number. There are lessons to be learned from the past, but there is also a danger in dwelling on it. It is now time to focus on the future.

IS THERE A WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP STYLE?

Women who are serious about assuming leadership roles need to assess their strengths and capitalize on them. In doing so, they must bear in mind that there are major biological and psychological differences between men and women that can affect the way both groups approach problems. One major difference is the brain. The controversial area of brain research suggests that the brain consists of right and left hemispheres. In general, men are right-brain dominant, which means they are creative and have good visual and spatial skills. Women, on the other hand, excel at verbal communication—a function of the left hemisphere of the brain. Dr. Deborah Waber's research has shown that women's brains are "less lateralized—their left and right hemispheres seem to share more tasks" (Weintraub, 1981). Noted neuropsychologist Jerry Levy (Weintraub, 1981) believes that it is this physical difference in the brain that allows women to see the big picture but gives men the advantage when it comes to focusing on details. Men and women also achieve identity differently. O'Reilly (1988) stated that women achieve identity by establishing and maintaining relationships. For men, identity is derived from autonomy and achievement. As a result, men often compete while women often cooperate.

It is important to remember that this research addresses differences. *Different* does not mean better or worse. These inherent differences do imply, however, that women should not try to assume a male leadership style, but should develop their own style within the framework of their femininity. Many female traits that have heretofore been considered liabilities may prove to be valuable assets for twenty-first century female administrators.

Women's cooperativeness is a valuable asset in leadership. Cooperation is an essential element in team building, and participatory management is a team-building approach. A strong emphasis on community, and on involving others, is important to women. Women's emphasis on willing and open communication is also valuable in administration. Women tend to be more vulnerable and open in their relationships than men. They operate through mutual interest rather than through manipulation, and their approach to problem solving is more likely

to be win-win. Women have always been the nurturers in this society and this manifests itself in the desire to help others grow and develop.

Shakeshaft (1986) wrote of the feminine culture that women create in schools due to women's unique focus on performing the job and to the female traits they bring to the work environment. According to Shakeshaft, in schools evidencing these traits, student and staff morale is higher; participation levels of students, staff, and parents are greater; staff productivity is greater; and students' academic achievement is higher.

Many authors warn against generalizing about masculine and feminine traits. Superintendents Lahr and Fought agree that it is unfair to say that men cannot be cooperative and intuitive, just as it is unfair to say that women cannot be competitive and assertive. Each person brings a unique blend of traits to the leadership role. The person who makes the best use of all these traits will have the greatest value to educational administration in the future.

HOW WOMEN CAN ENTER EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION

Women currently in administrative positions offer a number of suggestions to aspiring female administrators.

Know Yourself. Carol Gellner, director of vocational education at Greene Vocational School in Xenia, stated in a recent interview that, first and foremost, women must know themselves. It is important that women understand the demands of the job and determine in advance what they are willing to do to move into administration.

Share Goals. Once a women is committed to becoming an administrator, she should make her goals known. Sherry Lahr says that goals should be shared with all people who could be in a position to groom a woman for leadership and give her new responsibilities. Lahr encourages aspirants to not be timid about seeking assistance from both men and women.

Find A Mentor. A mentor is "a trusted and experienced counselor who influences the career development of an associate in a warm, caring, and helping relationship" (Dodgson, 1987). Kanter (1977) indicated that building power through alliances such as mentoring is essential if women are to be successful. In addition to offering advice and encouragement, mentors perform other functions. First, they are often in a position to give promotions or recommendations. They can also offer protection, help obtain needed information, or help secure assignments that provide visibility. Mentors also serve as role models. And last, but not least, a mentor's presence signals to onlookers that the protégé has the support of an influential person, resulting in "reflected power" (Kanter, 1977).

Unfortunately, finding a mentor is not always easy, especially for a woman. Research has shown that mentors tend to sponsor individuals with whom they can identify. Generally, men do not identify with women. Pavan (1987) reports in her study of Pennsylvania administrators' mentoring relationships that "females are as likely to mentor males as females, but males are much more likely to mentor males than females." Since most school administrators are men, this creates a problem for women seeking mentors. However, many women report having successful mentoring relationships with male superiors.

Network. Mentoring relationships often develop as a result of good performance on the job, but they can also be established through networking. Networking offers a chance to identify sources of support and to build a power base. "Women must voluntarily involve themselves in things that will get them recognized," says Louise Fought. She urges women to join professional and trade organizations.

Women must also give their support to informal groups for aspiring or practicing female administrators. LaQuita Ingle finds comfort in sharing issues and concerns with other professional women in the women's networking group started in her district. Networking allows women to help each other, and women need to become more comfortable in this professional role. Female administrators said one of the biggest deterrents to their success was lack of support from other women. One caution: Networks should be established with all persons who are in a position to help, not just with other women. The goal is to build bridges, not to set women further apart.

Be Prepared. Superintendent Fought also advises women to "be prepared for the job, whenever it arises. Take courses and get needed certification ahead of time." Likewise, Dr. Lahr reminds women that there is nothing like experience: "Grasp every opportunity to demonstrate responsible leadership."

Be Above Reproach. *But we have to be more competent and act more professional than our male peers!* lament many women. It is true that many women believe that they have to meet higher ethical and performance standards than males in similar positions. Edna Anderson, superintendent of Columbiana County Joint Vocational School District, said in a recent interview, "Knowing that I had to prove my worth was a great challenge as I moved

into administration." Anderson quickly pointed out, though, that opportunities for women are much better today "due to the reputations of other women who have become administrators." Those pioneers functioned in a goldfish bowl, where their every decision was scrutinized; however, they were extremely competent and they conducted themselves in a highly professional manner. They took themselves and their careers seriously and projected that image for all to see. It is that kind of solid performance that has begun to and will continue to erode gender barriers.

Do Not Make an Issue Out of Gender. The time has come to accept the fact that there are differences between men and women and in the way they function in leadership roles. Those differences should complement one another. Women should accept their gender and get on with being competent professionals.

CONCLUSION

The challenge for American education is real and immediate. If the nation is to retain a position of power in the world economy, a productive, technologically competent work force is necessary. The task of training these workers falls to education.

Strong leadership in schools is a must. Education cannot afford to ignore the talents of persons who are ready, willing, and able to assume leadership roles. Members of education boards must seek out professionals with effective leadership qualities, regardless of gender.

Women who believe they are ready to assume leadership positions must aggressively pursue those positions. They must demonstrate high levels of competence and professionalism in order to guarantee their success and pave the way for future generations of school leaders—many of whom just happen to be women!

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